

of nerve; in the latter, that there is a laxity and weakness of nerve; yet, by some strange anomaly in our mode of expressing our ideas, we apply the same adjective to both these states of the nervous system.

*Nervousness* may, however, be defined to be a state of morbid sensibility, and this is displayed in a thousand different ways, according to the age, to the sex, to the temperament, to the habits of life, to the condition of society in which the individual is placed. The people in this country are altogether more predisposed to this state, than is to be found elsewhere; this may be partly owing to the climate, to the anxieties which arise out of the peculiar habits of life, and to our moral and social condition. There is at all times a great sensitiveness in the English character, and also that of another kind, in the Irish, which most materially affects the mental and bodily health, and predisposes to the morbid sensibility of which I speak. In the latter nation it is more transient; the impressions are never lasting; they are creatures of impulse; feelingly alive to every sensation, they quickly exhibit their passions, and as soon forget the cause of excitement, unless they instantly act upon it. There never was an Irishman who presented himself to a hospital or a dispensary, who did not complain of an impression about his heart, which, translated out of its figurative language, means that he has what we technically term, "an anxiety about the præcordia," one of the most marked of the features of a nervous state. Every thing sinks deeper upon the mind of an Englishman; he is quite as sensitive, but the impression is more lasting; he ponders, he revolves everything within him; if he be ill he thinks only of his feelings; he becomes morbidly sensitive of every change; he loses his spirits; he is oppressed with a strange fear, which is attended with a degree of anxiety; he ceases to look forward with hope; every present difficulty is magnified; and soon the body partakes of the morbid condition of the mind, and this is exhibited in many various ways, of which the want of sleep is one of the most characteristic symptoms, besides various signs which rank under the name of hypochondriasis; for this condition *hyoscyamus* is particularly adapted, not only to procure sleep, but to tranquillize the frame, to soothe the disordered spirits, and (whilst tonic remedies give strength to the muscles and to the organs generally) to impart to the nervous system a repose and quiescence, which, I think, can be obtained from no other source with the same quickness, certainty, and general good effect.

That this medicine has some peculiar stimulating effect upon the mind, is proved from the acknowledged fact, that it produces a most extraordinary species of excitement; under its influence the mildest and the gentlest beings become highly irascible, and subject to uncontrollable fits of anger. Patients who have taken it, and not in large quantities, have been known, upon the slightest provocation, to fly into most violent passions, and to become perfectly, but fortunately momentarily, mad with rage. Of the subjects that engage the attention of the medical philosopher, none can be more striking than the marvellous influence of some small portion of an herb, or a mineral, upon that reasoning power which elevates man above all the objects of this wondrous creation. A minute quantity of the juice which exudes from the poppy will clear the intellect, will elevate the mind, and will impart to it energy and vigour. Part of a leaf of the henbane will urge him on to violence and to passion; a small quantity of belladonna will impair his memory; a little hemlock will render him stupid.—*Ibid.*

29. *Hyoscyamus in diseases of the genital organs.* By G. G. SIGMOND, M. D.—Among the diseases in which *hyoscyamus* is found to be particularly serviceable are, affections of the neck of the bladder, irritable states of that organ, chordee, when there is great and acute pain in the neck of the bladder and about the pubes, whether it arises from a retention of urine, or, as Pott supposes, from irritation attended with spasm, for sometimes where the pain is most acute, on passing the catheter no urine is to be found; for this a combination of camphor and *hyoscyamus* is invaluable; and to Mr. Benjamin Bell we are indebted for the recommendation of this practice. Camphor alone is apt to produce many very uncomfortable and even distressing symptoms, nausea, heartburn, tremors; yet, when properly combined with *hyoscyamus*, it is perfectly free from any evil influence. Three grains of camphor to two grains of henbane, was a favourite remedy of Mr. Bell, and on some occasions he added either a grain of capsicum, or one of ipecacuan. The relief afforded by a few drops of the tincture of *hyoscyamus*, not more than

ten, for instance, in a glass of warm water, is quite striking, in that distressing state of irritable bladder and urethra which accompanies the inflammatory stage of gonorrhœa. Sometimes where the *ardor urinae* is troublesome, and the desire to evacuate the few drops which exist in the bladder is so urgent, that it appears as if not an instant can be passed without it, and on the attempt the pain and spasm are most fearful to encounter. This dose, repeated every ten minutes, and some mucilage of gum arabic, will be found most decided in its effect before it has been administered three or four times; and it will not leave behind the bad effects which follow upon the tincture of opium which is generally prescribed.

30. *On the use of belladonna in scarlet-fever.* By G. G. SIGMOND, M. D.—That belladonna, in infinitesimal doses, should cure the simple form of scarlet fever, I doubt not, for, in fact, the less that is done the better, as Sydenham has told us:—"I judge it sufficient for the patient wholly to refrain from flesh and all kinds of spirituous liquor, and to keep his room without lying always in bed. When the skin is entirely peeled off, and the symptoms vanished, it is proper to give a gentle purge, suited to the age and strength of the patient. By this plain and manifestly natural method, this disease in name only, for it is little more, is easily cured without trouble or danger, whereas, on the contrary, if we add to the patient's evils either by confining him continually in bed, or exhibiting abundance of cardiacs and other superfluous remedies, the disease is immediately increased, and he frequently falls a victim to the over officiousness of the physician." These admirable observations are recognised to be true by every medical man who often sees scarlet fever rendered most dangerous by too great an anxiety. Of all the sequels which follow upon disease, none are so striking as the dropsy that, by bad treatment, is consequent upon scarlet fever. You will find that where patients have been confined to bed, or kept excessively hot, when the epidermis is about to be thrown off, that this dropsical effusion often occurs. There is a necessity that an evaporation should go on by the surface of the body, and nature removes that thin impermeable covering, or layer, which is spread over the whole of the external system, in order that this process may be carried on. If it be impeded in any way, an effusion of a fluid into some of the tissues, or cavities, will take place, and you will find, under such circumstances, that the best remedy is an imitation of nature, and which, as you may learn from Magendie's admirable lectures in the *Lancet*, now being delivered, is practised in dropsies upon the continent, and has also attracted some attention here, for several cases of abdominal dropsy have been cured by removing a large portion of the epidermis with a blister, or stimulating liniment. The mode of action is easily understood. Upon the removal of the cuticle, evaporation commences with the most surprising rapidity, and gradually the fluid contained in the abdominal cavity is entirely dissipated. The process of evaporation when the epidermis is removed, is a matter very well worthy of our deepest consideration; it explains many phenomena with which we are often struck, and which, till lately, have been unaccounted for. Thus we constantly see, more particularly in children, that where very extensive burns, or scalds, have taken place, and where large portions of the epidermis have been removed,—where everything has appeared to be going on remarkably well in consequence of surgical skill,—sudden death has occurred, or a gradual exhaustion of the powers of life. This has arisen from the rapidity with which evaporation of the fluids, necessary for carrying on the nervous functions, has taken place, and has no connexion whatever with the extensive injury, or with the pain attendant upon it.

In those varieties of scarlet fever which, at their onset, exhibit an intensity either of inflammation or congestion, after the due exhibition of cathartic medicines, the cold affusion, as recommended by Currie, and assented to by Armstrong, and by a great proportion of high authorities, is the mode of practice to be pursued, unless the congestive scarlatina requires venesection, which, in all cases, is most cautiously to be practised. In these states there is little time for the administration of belladonna; and, as we know what steps are to be pursued, we should hesitate before we venture to try an unknown remedy where we possess means on which we have every reason to place the firmest reliance. We are too apt to be anxious in our treatment of disease, and to see in too unfavourable a light, the symptoms that present themselves; indeed, the perusal of the delineations of